Progressive time delay and contingent reinforcement increased peer imitation in preschool children with disabilities to levels comparable to their peers.

INTRO
- Imitation is a behavioral cusp which allows children to access new learning opportunities (Hixson, 2004; Najdowski, Gould, Lanagan, & Bishop, 2014).
- Children with disabilities often have deficits in imitation skills (Oppenheim-Leaf, Leaf, & Call, 2012; American Psychiatric Association, 2000).
- Systematic prompting procedures can be used to teach preschool age children to imitate their peers in play contexts (Barton & Ledford, 2018; Francis, 2018; Sweeney, Barton, & Ledford, 2018; Venn et al., 1993).

METHODS
1. 4 preschoolers at risk for or with disabilities and 13 peer participants
2. Multiple-probe across participants design
3. Target participants played in dyads with peers that rotated on a daily basis to increase the likelihood of generalization
4. Conducted sessions with peer participants to collect a normative peer sample
5. Measured peer imitation that occurred within and outside of trials during sessions

RESULTS
- We observed that peer imitation increased to levels comparable to their peers’ upon introduction of the intervention.
- Generalization results are promising as levels of peer imitation during intervention and maintenance are higher than baseline.

DISCUSSION
- The use of preference and reinforcer assessments is necessary to identify effective reinforcers.
- Thinning of reinforcement is necessary to maintain peer imitation at intervention levels.
- Normative peer samples should be utilized to set goals and assess the outcomes of interventions.

Figure 1. Unprompted (UPC), prompted (PC), and spontaneous peer imitation (SPI) across all four participants.